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VA and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services join to strengthen safety surveillance for medications issued to Veterans

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) recently announced an agreement that greatly improves drug safety monitoring of prescriptions, including opioids.

The agreement, which was formalized March 21, will give VA the ability to monitor medical prescriptions issued outside the VA through Medicare Part D.

“VA is committed to patient safety, and our robust medication surveillance systems are part of that commitment,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “This agreement greatly enhances medication safety for Veterans by providing better oversight of drugs that Veterans may be able to obtain from both agencies.”

VA currently has a robust system in place for medication surveillance to ensure safe use by Veteran patients and the ability to analyze patient outcomes. This new agreement will enable VA to incorporate up-to-date Medicare prescription information into its safety surveillance operations.

By incorporating prescriptions dispensed through Medicare, VA has access to more accurate information about the medications used by its patients.

More than 5 million Veterans receive prescription medications through VA. With the creation of the Medicare Part D benefit, Veterans dually enrolled in VA and Medicare have access to prescription benefits through both VA and Medicare, creating the potential for adverse drug interactions, duplication of use and greater risk of adverse drug events, including overdoses.

“This agreement represents a new level of information sharing between VA and CMS, which will improve care coordination and better protect our beneficiaries,” said CMS principal deputy administrator for Operations and Policy Kimberly Brandt. “Leveraging data is a key element of CMS’ efforts to combat the opioid epidemic, and we look forward to continued collaboration with VA on this important issue.”

To learn more about the risks of opioid-related adverse events and overdose among Veteran patients receiving dual prescriptions with VA and CMS, visit <https://annals.org/aim/fullarticle/2728200/dual-receipt-prescription-opioids-from-department-veterans-affairs-medicare-part>.

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